also organised on the farmers' fields to disseminate the improved production and projection technologies.

The production of oilseeds has increased from 10.83 million tonnes in 1985-86 to 22.02 million tonnes in 1997-98. Concerted efforts are being made to achieve self-sufficiency in oilseeds production by taking up oilseeds production programme more vigorously.

Production of Cashew

937. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that cashew production is only 50% of the nation's demand;

(b) if so, what are the steps taken to improve the production of cashew; and

(c) whether Government have made any proposal to the State to include the cashew cultivation in the plantations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The present production of Cashew in the country is about 50% of the demand of the industry. For increasing production and productivity of cashewnut in the country, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Integrated Development of Cashew is being implemented with an outlay of Rs. 20.00 crores for the year, 1998-99. Under the Scheme, assistance is being provided for new planting, replanting, adoption of improved production technology, intensive pest control measures, setting up of regional nurseries for production of quality planting material and training of farmers.

(c) The Ministry of Commerce had requested State Governments in May, 1993 to consider allotment of wastelands to cashew processors-exporters on a long term lease basis.

Research by Central Tuber Crop Research Institute on Plastic

938. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether as per the research of Central Tuber Crop Research Institute, plastic can be bio-degradable; if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether patenting of the above research has been sought from Central Research Institute; if so, whether the permission has been granted; and

(c) whether the commercial production in the field has since begun; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir. Synthetic polymers filled, grafted or blended with starch, either in its native form or modified, possess the potential to impart biodegradability to the fabricated plastics goods. A process has been developed to blend up to 40% starch with polyethylene to get injection moulding and fild grade thermoplastics.

(b) The application pertaining to composition and process for production of starch based biodegradable plastics has been filed through National Research Development Corporation, New Delhi with Controller of patents, the Patent Office, New Delhi.

(c) No. Sir.

प्राकृतिक आपदाओं के कारण फसलों को होने वाली क्षति

939. श्रीमती सरोज दुबे: क्या प्रधान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार को ज्ञात है कि सारे देश में प्राकृतिक आपदाओं के कारण किसानों की काफी फसल प्रतिवर्ष चौपट हो जाती है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो क्या सरकार किसानों के कल्याणार्थ "फसल बीमा योजना" लागू करने जा रही है;